

isolated events. On the other hand, violations involving willful actions and/or posing serious health, safety, or environmental threats should ordinarily result in enforcement actions, regardless of the entity's size.

Once FRA has assessed a civil penalty, it is authorized to adjust or compromise the initial penalty claims based on a wide variety of mitigating factors, unless FRA must terminate the claim for some reason. FRA has the discretion to reduce the penalty as it deems fit, but not below the statutory minimums. The mitigating criteria FRA evaluates are found in the railroad safety statutes and SBREFA: The severity of the safety or health risk presented; the existence of alternative methods of eliminating the safety hazard; the entity's culpability; the entity's compliance history; the entity's ability to pay the assessment; the impacts an assessment might exact on the entity's continued business; and evidence that the entity acted in good faith. FRA staff attorneys regularly invite small entities to present any information related to these factors, and reduce civil penalty assessments based on the value and integrity of the information presented. Staff attorneys conduct conference calls or meet with small entities to discuss pending violations, and explain FRA's view on the merits of any defenses or mitigating factors presented that may have resulted or failed to result in penalty reductions. Among the "other factors" FRA considers at this stage is the promptness and thoroughness of the entity's remedial action to correct the violations and prevent a recurrence. Small entities should be sure to address these factors in communications with FRA concerning civil penalty cases. Long-term solutions to compliance problems will be given great weight in FRA's determinations of a final settlement offer.

Finally, under FRA's Safety Assurance and Compliance Program (SACP), FRA identifies systemic safety hazards that continue to occur in a carrier or shipper operation, and in cooperation with the subject business, develops an improvement plan to eliminate those safety concerns. Often, the plan provides small entities with a reasonable time frame in which to make improvements without the threat of civil penalty. If FRA determines that the entity has failed to comply with the improvement plan, however, enforcement action is initiated.

FRA's small entity enforcement policy is flexible and comprehensive. FRA's first priority in its compliance and enforcement activities is public and employee safety. However, FRA is committed to obtaining compliance and enhancing safety with reasoned, fair methods that do not inflict undue hardship on small entities.

[68 FR 24894, May 9, 2003]

PART 210—RAILROAD NOISE EMISSION COMPLIANCE REGULATIONS

Subpart A—General Provisions

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APPENDIX A TO PART 210—SUMMARY OF NOISE STANDARDS, 40 CFR PART 201

APPENDIX B TO PART 210—SWITCHER LOCOMOTIVE ENFORCEMENT POLICY

AUTHORITY: Sec. 17, Pub. L. 92-574, 86 Stat. 1234 (42 U.S.C. 4916); sec. 1.49(o) of the regulations of the Office of the Secretary of Transportation, 49 CFR 1.49(o).

SOURCE: 48 FR 56758, Dec. 23, 1983, unless otherwise noted.

Subpart A—General Provisions

§ 210.1 Scope of part.

This part prescribes minimum compliance regulations for enforcement of the Railroad Noise Emission Standards established by the Environmental Protection Agency in 40 CFR part 201.

§ 210.3 Applicability.

(a) Except as provided in paragraph (b) of this section, the provisions of this part apply to the total sound emitted by moving rail cars and locomotives (including the sound produced by refrigeration and air conditioning units that are an integral element of such equipment), active retarders,